

on the move

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North Carolina A&T State University
School of Agriculture and
Environmental Sciences
Newsletter
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SAES lands \$2.66 million in Capacity Building Grants



One of the 12 projects supported by new funding from USDA will support the growth in pastured swine production in North Carolina.

A whopping 12 new USDA Capacity Building Grants will put the SAES seriously “on the move” in the coming years, as the funds build infrastructure to meet the challenges faced by agribusiness and rural North Carolina in the 21st century.

A&T received the maximum allowable under the guidelines of the grant process — \$2.66 million — a fact that speaks highly of the relevance of these projects to the real-life needs of individuals and communities, said Dr. Shirley Hyman-Parker, associate dean for the Agricultural Research Program.

“If the quality is there, that’s why you get the maximum,” she said. “We heard that several of the 22 grant proposals submitted were of high enough quality to have been funded, but were not, only because we had reached the limit.”

She attributes the success to both the hard work of faculty and a new review process at the school level to improve the quality of the grant proposals before they are

submitted to Washington.

Many of the projects address food safety and obesity, which are two of the biggest issues in agriculture today. For instance, one of the funded projects will set the groundwork for a doctoral program in food and bioprocess technologies, producing professionals capable of researching and developing better ways to process food for optimal health and safety. Several hurdles at the University- and state-level need to be surmounted before the new Ph.D. program is approved, but the funds will enable the SAES to begin the process by strengthening infrastructure to support it and writing a curriculum. In other examples: Kitchen technology in the school will get an upgrade to better prepare students for future professions in educating consumers or high school students about proper food handling; and a training program will be developed for fresh produce growers on new food-safety regulations and use of barcode technology. The new

regulations and barcodes can halt foodborne illness outbreaks more quickly, but farmers will need training and equipment to comply.

For the first time, Cooperative Extension specialists were permitted to submit projects, and two that will expand economic opportunities for small farms were funded. One will introduce farmers to agroforestry as a means for growing income-producing trees on tracts unsuitable for other crops. The second will expand learning opportunities in raising meat-producing livestock on pasture. Big challenges that face pasture-based livestock operations are soil erosion and ground or surface water pollution, and part of the education will address those issues.

“Ultimately, these grants mean better outcomes for our farming community, enabling us to fulfill our mission to serve them,” said Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, associate dean and administrator of the Cooperative Extension Program.

Dr. Mac’s Moment

OK. Your eyes are not deceiving you. This space in August was a column from Dr. Alton Thompson saying he’s back as dean of the SAES. Since then, he’s moved on to another land-grant university and I’m back at the helm. We wish him well.

Through this staff shuffle, the SAES never missed a beat. In fact, we started the academic year off with a bang. We have more students than we’ve ever had in the SAES. We got a record 12 Capacity Building grants for a total of \$2.66 million. We just got notification of another \$500,000 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Grant for the Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies. Our research faculty got \$21 million in external grants last year. We just hosted over 250 fifth grade students on campus for the 4-H National Youth Science Day experiment that was conducted all over the world on Oct. 6. The experiment was developed by a team from A&T.

This is the power of agriculture and this is our working theme for the coming year: *The Power of the A*. This is also a pivotal year for us. We are at the end of our present strategic plan and we are beginning the process of developing the next roadmap that will guide our direction for the coming years.

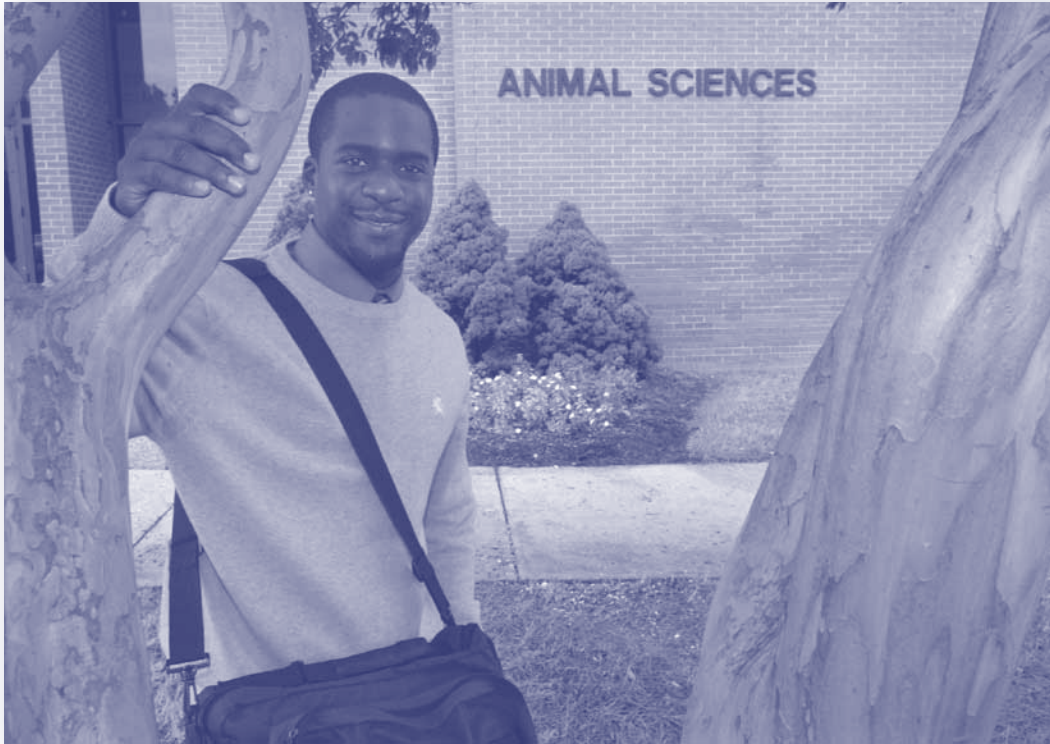
We will spend time talking with our campus partners about what direction we will take. But we also want to hear from our constituents across the state as to the needs and direction they think we should follow. After all, agriculture is one of this state’s major industries and we play a major role in helping to set that direction.

When we invite you to participate in focus group meetings or to share your concerns with us, please know that we are doing so because we want to make sure we are going in the direction that’s best for North Carolina.

As I said earlier, we are working under the theme of *The Power of the A*. That’s the power that will keep us on the move.

— Dr. Donald McDowell, *Interim Dean, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences*

Challenges facing SAES male students become Noble cause



Torel Daniels was the inaugural president and a founding member of Men on the Move.

Animal science major Torel Daniels returned for his sophomore year at A&T in 2008, 11-members shy of the 15-member crew he hung out with as a freshman. Finances, fatherhood and low grades had claimed his friends. Daniels was worried. What was the fate of black male students? Black females were thriving.

When he turned to the Animal Sciences Department's chairman, Dr. Ralph Noble, for answers, Noble's encouragement resulted in the founding of *Men on the Move*, a male mentoring organization devoted to leadership and retention.

Formed in 2008 with Noble at the helm, Daniels as founding president and four other students in the mix, *Men on the Move* seeks

to help male students do well at college. The members discuss their challenges, work on solutions, study, do community outreach, and resolve to improve individually and as a group. The organization is not based on scholastic achievement, and is open to SAES male students whether "they have a 4.0 or a 2.0 grade point average," Noble says.

"We were seeing a significant decline in

the number of males coming into our program and successfully graduating in the four-to-six year period," Noble says. "And of the 25 percent of males in the department, there were only 5 percent of them in student clubs and organizations, and none of them were officers."

Student testimonials attest that those numbers are starting to improve, along with male classroom performance. Noble says he'll soon undertake a more empirical study. For now, though, students are learning the importance of being gentlemen and have started opening doors for women, helping

When another student says it, the message tends to engage and impact a student's thinking to a greater extent. — DR. RALPH NOBLE

them carry heavy loads and being polite to them. They have recruited other students into *Men on the Move*, and their overall membership has more than quadrupled, to 25–30 members. The *Men on the Move* have amassed such solidarity that they now meet weekly — Thursdays at noon — instead of monthly, setting their own agendas and running their sessions.

Animal Sciences' male faculty members, Drs. Tracy Hanner, Willie Willis and Rusty Miller, have also become involved: advising, paying for the lunch meetings and attending the student organization's meetings. A&T's students also mentor male students at Dudley and Grimsley high schools, and they have worked with other schools in sponsoring and hosting campus tours.

They have become so successful that when Animal Sciences students petitioned the University's Office for Student Development for support and recognition, club organizers also received a suggestion that they expand *Men on the Move* so it would include other campus departments, schools and colleges.

"They're learning peer success from talking to each other," Noble says. "It's not what another professor says, no matter how many degrees they have in life. When another stu-

dent says it, the message tends to engage and impact a student's thinking to a greater extent."

Noble's assertion is supported by students. Daniels, an Eagle Scout, double-major animal scientist and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, is plenty motivated, but still says the combination of parental encouragement, his friends dropping out of college, and involvement in *Men on the Move* have all worked to make him, "sit back and focus on my school work."

Shola Phillips, the club's current president, went from an F on his first animal science test from Dr. Noble, to an A — "a big A" — after joining *Men on the Move* and its study group.

Phillips, a sophomore agricultural education major

and a former high-school football lineman, cuts quite an impressive figure, one that can sometimes be downright imposing to some people. He recalls recently attending a Young Farmer and Rancher conference in Raleigh, where he was the only black face in a room full of white attendees. Phillips recalls the audience "all turning around and looking at me" and getting the "why is he



Dr. Ralph Noble shows Justin Hayes, a senior majoring in animal sciences (right) how to determine the age of a dairy cow when a birth certificate isn't handy. Among Noble's tangible resources for attracting students to animal sciences programs is the dairy unit at the 492-acre University Farm. Noble and other faculty mentors have developed a new program for male students that is complementing coursework with life-skill development.

here" stares as he walked in the room. Yet, he took a seat in the first row and actively engaged in the meeting and discussion.

"The guy who was presenting came to me afterward and said 'wow, you really understood what I was saying.'" Phillips recalls, crediting his confidence as a speaker to *Men on the Move*, Dr. Noble and his advisor, Dr. Antoine Alston.

"Men on the Move helps you with lots of things, including public speaking. I had to speak to about 50 or 60 people at the Carter G. Woodson School; Dr Noble just told me to come up and speak," Phillips says. "I was nervous, but he said, 'you'll be fine.' He told me what to do and I couldn't believe that I could do that. But I did."



Shola Phillips, president of Men on the Move, conducts mushroom research in Dr. Omon's Carver Hall lab.



Dr. Sung-Jin Lee

Dr. Sung-Jin Lee has joined the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences as an assistant professor and housing researcher. Lee received her doctorate and master's degree in housing with a minor in gerontology from Virginia Tech. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in library and information sciences at Chungnam National University in South Korea. Her current research interests include housing policies; housing and social issues focusing on minorities; and housing alternatives for older adults.



Dr. Yi-Ling Pan

Dr. Yi-Ling Pan has joined the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences as an assistant professor. Pan received her master's and doctorate in dietetics and nutrition from Florida International University. She is a registered dietitian and an evidence analyst for the American Dietetic Association. Her research has focused on improved nutrition for older adults, the development of more reliable dietary assessment tools that are also culturally sensitive, and analysis of public policies influencing food and nutrition services.



Anna Reeves

Anna Reeves has joined the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Design as an assistant professor of landscape architecture. Reeves earned her bachelor's degree in landscape architecture with a minor in horticulture from N.C. State. She then went on to earn dual master's degrees in city and regional planning and landscape architecture from Cornell University. Reeves has worked in professional practice for the last six years at the multidisciplinary design firm, Sasaki Associates of Boston. While at Sasaki, her practice investigated sustainable responses to university master planning and construction, both domestically and internationally. Her research interests focus on the intersection of design, ecology and analysis.



Adonica Williams

Adonica Williams has joined the Agricultural Research Program's support staff as the unit's grants administrator. Williams, a Certified Research Administrator, comes to the ARP from A&T's Division of Research, where she served for six years as a budget manager.

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Re:search ready for readership

The 2010 issue of the Agricultural Research Program's annual magazine, Re:search, will be mailed out in the next few weeks. Articles in this issue cover ARP research in nutrition, small farms, agroforestry, green fuels, organic markets, and antibiotic-free livestock feeds. Additional copies of Re:search can be obtained at the SAES Web page, or by calling 336.285.4712.

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